

**South Lakeland District Council**  
**Council**  
**Tuesday, 15 December 2020**  
**Economy, Culture and Leisure Portfolio**

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**Portfolio:** Cllr Robin Ashcroft

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The Council Plan objectives as they relate to the Portfolio area of work, and cross-cutting work developed through the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy, promoting Culture leisure activities and the arts and developing strategy for cultural assets.

Working in partnership to ensure a thriving and prosperous District within the context of the wider sub- region, through effective economic development, regeneration and transport strategies.

Working in partnership to ensure thriving and prosperous town centres throughout the District.

Providing public realm infrastructure to promote the local economy.

Promoting small businesses in both towns and rural areas

The Council plan objectives in relation to promoting culture, leisure activities and the arts.

To work with our cultural organisations to attract investment and to promote South Lakeland as a premier area for Arts and Events.

**Policies, Plans and Strategies**

- Morecambe Bay Prosperity and Resilience Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy
- Arts and Events
- Grants Strategy
- Licensing and Statement of Gambling Policies

**Key Areas:**

- Economic Inward Investment
- Business Support and Sector Development
- Visitor Economy
- Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation Strategies
- Markets
- Arts and Culture
- Grants
- Public Halls
- Use of community assets for the promotion of arts and culture
- Heritage and Events

- Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment
- Voluntary Sector Engagement in relation to Culture and Leisure
- Leisure and Recreation
- Licensing and Gambling
- Cross Authority Economic initiatives

## **Covid Recovery Response**

### **Grants**

The Council has administered a number of emergency grant schemes for businesses in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has helped businesses and individuals of all sizes and sectors, safeguarding businesses and jobs throughout the district. £67m has been paid to 5,850 businesses affected by the first national lockdown. SLDC is now administering the Local Restrictions Support Grant for businesses that have been forced to close during the second national lockdown, as well as the Additional Restrictions Grant, and to date 2,345 further grant payments have been made to the total of £3.4m.

The grant commitments to strategic cultural partners were reviewed at Cabinet in February 2020. The agreed strategic cultural partners demonstrate a high importance to the district's cultural offer and have been particularly adversely affected by the Covid-19 restrictions. It was agreed that this support was invaluable and that they would continue to receive a grant payment for this financial year. These commitments will again be reviewed in February 2021 in accordance with the Budget.

### **Business Support**

The Council has continued to provide essential services over this period, with specialist teams on hand to assist South Lakeland businesses. SLDC has worked with partners to provide business support, making a significant financial contribution to delivering free support to start-ups and existing businesses in partnership with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

The Council has also worked closely with Cumbria Tourism, as the Destination Management Organisation for the area, to deliver key elements of the visitor economy recovery plan, as well as helping to shape the wider recovery plans for the area being co-ordinated by Cumbria LEP.

South Lakelands economy is heavily reliant on the Visitor Economy which has been drastically impacted following the Coronavirus outbreak. The Council has been working closely with businesses to support them in introducing measures that protect themselves and the public from the spread of Coronavirus, but allows them to reopen and encourage visitors to visit South Lakeland safely and respectfully.

Strategic partnerships with Cumbria Action for Sustainability, Future Fixers and Green Small Business has also seen the funding of initiatives and support which enables businesses to make the most of opportunities presented by the green economy, including grants to SMEs towards improving their environmental credentials, increasing their profitability and reducing their carbon footprint in the process.

In response to the pandemic, the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Culture and Leisure has now established and chairs an Economic Renewal Strategy Group for South Lakeland which has representation from MPs, major employers and partners from around the district.

## **Economic Inward Investment**

Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, SLDC has played a crucial role in contributing and attracting millions of pounds worth of inward investment into the district, including:

- Cross-a-moor roundabout – Contributions to the estimated £9.4m scheme include amounts from SLDC and Cumbria County Council, with £3m secured from Highways England Growth Housing Fund, £925k from CLEP through Growth Deal funding and £2.4m from CLEP through Cumbria Infrastructure Fund.
- Grange Lido and promenade – £2.2m towards Lido restoration, funded by SLDC. £2.35m was secured from the Coastal Communities Fund for a joint Morecambe Bay Partnership/SLDC Bay-wide programme, of which £1m is earmarked for the prom and connectivity with the lido.
- Kendal Flood Risk Management Scheme – Estimated construction cost for the three phases is £72m. The first element in Kendal will cost around £18m, with £13m secured from the EA and £5m of ERDF funding.
- South Lakeland House renovations – £2.9m overall cost which is majority SLDC funded with £440k LEP grant to fund the creation of additional business space.
- Grizebeck Bypass – In October 2020 the Department for Transport confirmed £12.7m delivery funding for the A595 Grizebeck Improvement. Together with a contribution of £2.2m from Cumbria LEP, work from Cumbria County Council can now continue to deliver the improvement.
- Borderlands Place Programme – South Lakeland has put forward Ulverston as its chosen location for possible investment through the Borderlands Place Programme. An outline economic case has been submitted in partnership with Cumbria County Council for consideration by the Borderlands Board which, if successful, could release up to £3m of funding for Ulverston.
- GSK Masterplan – A masterplan has been commissioned by SLDC to guide the future development of the GSK site in Ulverston following the company's decision to reduce its operations on the site. This seeks to establish a prosperous future for the site with the intention to attract life sciences investment and high value employment.
- Ulverston BID – Following a successful ballot held in October 2020, Ulverston BID will now be renewed for another five year term, starting in April 2021. This will see greater private investment made available for Ulverston town centre initiatives in the coming years.

## **Town Centre Planning, Car Parks and Transportation Strategies**

The Council has published its Kendal Town Centre Strategy which sets out a long-term strategic approach to ensuring Kendal remains an attractive place to live, work and visit. This will inform Council plans, policies and priorities and be used to help secure future investment. The Strategy was launched jointly with the Kendal Vision, led by public/private sector partnership Kendal Futures, and a partnership approach is being taken to deliver on their aspirations to create a more sustainable and vibrant Kendal. In addition, following the Council's submission of an Expression of Interest for Kendal for the Future High Streets Fund, Kendal has now been selected as a national pilot for the newly formed High Streets Task Force. This will see expertise and resources piloted in Kendal, which can also be applied to wider South Lakeland, before being rolled out across the country next year.

The Council has undertaken a car parking study of Kendal to understand where publicly available visitors, shoppers, workers and public transport car parking is under stress. The study identifies how those stresses are likely to change over time, how council car parks and

other publicly owned car parks and on street car parking can be most effectively managed to maximise town centre viability and visitor spend; and to quantify the need for additional parking spaces in the context of effective parking and traffic management. Whilst the report is currently in draft and will be released in due course, some actions have already been taken to address some of the points in the report such as:

- Acquisition of Dowker Lane Car Park
- New Car Park on Parkside Road – Planning obtained and the tender has been received and tender docs being reviewed prior to works starting on site.
- Review of all parking signage in the Town Centre to improve visitor experience.
- Investigation into the feasibility of installing electric vehicle charging points.
- Kendal College has reviewed its charging Policy to offer parking all day for £2 from 1st April 2020. This will open up parking opportunities for the Town during College holidays.

The Government announced that retail businesses and high street shops could reopen to the public from 15 June following their closure during the peak of Coronavirus.

Since then, SLDC has worked closely with CCC, LDNPA, BIDS, Town/Parish Councils and local businesses to ensure they could reopen safely to the public.

Signage has been installed advising people to observe social distancing and the measures introduced by individual shops in accordance with the Government's 'Covid Secure' guidance across principal areas within South Lakeland.

Hand Sanitising stations have also been installed as well as signage directing people to available public toilet facilities. Directional systems will be installed on narrow streets and safe queuing measures installed outside shops. Customers are being encouraged to use contactless payments where possible to minimise the risk of virus transmission.

SLDC have been conducting enhanced cleaning in the principal areas. Public Benches are available for use however signage will be displayed to encourage social distancing.

## **Markets**

In 2019 it was agreed at Cabinet to explore the potential for an innovative and experienced operator to manage Kendal's indoor and outdoor markets as part of a two stage procurement process. As part of Stage 1 the Council investigated what interest there was in the private sector to take on the running of Kendal markets, whether that be running the markets as one or as two separate markets, understanding the financial implications this would have on our revenue budget, understanding the economic benefits that a new operator could bring to the town and investigating what social value could be added through a different operating model for the markets.

In light of Coronavirus it was felt it was best to re-tender the Markets through a two staged approach. Upon return of tenders, competitive dialogue will begin with those who have submitted a tender, the closing date is 8 July 2020. Further detail to be provided in a separate report to Cabinet in January 2021.

Both indoor and outdoor markets have now re-opened to the public following lockdown with safety measures in place.

## **Arts and Culture**

The Council has been working closely with strategic cultural partners throughout 2019/20 and organisations to encourage, support and promote culture, arts and events across the district. Close partnership working with Arts Council England and other cultural organisations has resulted in funding being secured to facilitate significant initiatives to promote South Lakeland as a leading cultural destination and premier rural area for arts, events and festivals. Unfortunately many events were unable to take place throughout 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, however some events went virtual including the Lakes International Comic Arts Festival and Kendal Mountain Festival which supported the districts economy and helped stop the spread of Coronavirus.

The Council is continuing to explore new opportunities for cultural partnerships, initiatives and development as a cohesive part of the Lancaster South Cumbria Economic Region initiative as well as the promotion of the Cumbria Public Health Strategy.

In August 2019 the Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Region (LSCER) was announced as one of only two rural areas in the UK to be accepted as an Arts Cultural Compact, an innovative approach to releasing untapped economic potential through investment in culture.

Work is still underway to use the existing LSCER partnership to bring together key stakeholders to work and innovate to realise the vision for Morecambe Bay, a significant change in how things have been done by piloting a model connecting the three localities' distinct and different cultural assets to boost future creativity, investment, innovation, jobs and prosperity. The cross sector membership of the Cultural Compact will bring together Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Universities, Colleges, Businesses and Cultural and Creative Organisations.

The Council has been one of the supportive partners in major capital infrastructure developments of the Wordsworth Trust 'Reimagining Wordsworth, and the 'Our Digital Future' initiative at the Brewery Arts Centre.

The Council is still working with its creative partners, Craven District Council, Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks on the 'Great Place Lakes and Dales' initiative delivering the remaining programme and action plan to promote the development of sustainable, resilient and creative communities which will in turn retain and attract younger people to South Lakeland and Craven districts to influence, support and create our future economy.

## **Public Halls and use of community assets for the promotion of arts and culture**

Prior to the Coronavirus outbreak the Council had been supporting cultural and local events for communities through the use of public halls. Regular events held in SLDC halls included:

- Weekly coffee mornings
- Wedding Ceremonies
- Training sessions
- Multi-agency meetings
- Fitness Classes
- Language Classes
- Financial support through the Eden and South Lakes Credit Union
- Theatre performances
- Magistrates and Civil Courts

All Council owned properties were closed during the national lockdowns and events that were due to take place were cancelled in accordance with Government guidance. All public spaces within the Council owned building had social distancing measures and sanitation points installed to minimise the spread of Coronavirus.

The refurbishment works to Kendal Town Hall and South Lakeland House were delayed following the outbreak of Coronavirus, however in accordance with guidelines works commenced from August 2020. The contractors are aware of the social distancing and sanitation requirements and are working in line with Government guidelines. The refurbishments will alter the access and usage of the Town Hall and South Lakeland House for visitors and employees, as well as providing flexible business space.

### **Heritage, Events and Heritage Listed Buildings and built environment**

The Burton-in-Kendal Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) is a three year programme, jointly funded by the District Council and Burton-in-Kendal Parish Council, with matching funding from Historic England. The opportunity to develop a PSiCA arose when Historic England added the Burton in Kendal Conservation Area to its national 'Heritage at Risk' register. The aim of the PSiCA scheme is to see the Conservation Area removed from the register following a 3 to 4 year programme of public realm improvements, grant-aided repairs to historic buildings and wider management and planning guidance. Progress to date includes:

- A major public realm improvement scheme for the Square is now complete, excepting some remediation work. The scheme greatly enhances this important public space at the heart of the village conservation area and is helping alleviate local surface water flooding. A formal opening is planned in spring 2021. Local residents hosted VE day celebrations in the Square in period dress on 8 May.
- Grant-aided repair work to the former Royal Hotel building commenced in September 2020. The recent completion of the Square has sparked renewed interest in the take up of repair grants from owners of listed buildings in the vicinity of the Square.
- A draft Conservation Area Management Plan has been completed and a Village Design Statement is also nearing completion.

The Council also assisted Cartmel Village Society in preparing a draft Conservation Area Management Plan.

It is proposed to progress consultation and adoption of the above Conservation Area Management Plans and Village Design Statement as Supplementary Planning Documents when Conservation Specialist advice is available to the Council.

### **Leisure and Recreation**

The Council has worked in partnership with GLL to provide local leisure opportunities such as exercise classes, pool facilities, gym and indoor sports facilities for communities at locations in Kendal, Ulverston and Windermere in 2020/21, restrictions permitting.

A feasibility study for Ulverston leisure Centre is ongoing and the Council is continuing to liaise with user groups and GSK regarding future proposals. Upon completion of the feasibility study a formal consultation period will be held with user groups and the Town Council and once this has been concluded a report will be considered at Cabinet to formally agree the facilities mix.

As reported in the Promoting South Lakeland Portfolio Holder Report, Kendal Leisure Centre hosted a temporary recovery centre and a drive thru testing facility during Coronavirus.

Following the reductions of Coronavirus cases the recovery centre was decommissioned. GLL are making provisions in line with strict government guidance to safely reopen leisure facilities from November. The materials used for the recovery centre bays were reused to ensure social distancing in the gym.

### **Licensing and Gambling**

As part of the Customer Connect Programme in the future customers will have the opportunity to apply or renew a licence online.

Virtual Licensing Committee meetings have been held throughout the Coronavirus pandemic to ensure the responsibility for licensing functions in respect of the Licensing Act 2003.

### **Cross Authority Economic initiatives**

SLDC has been continuing to work in partnership with Lancaster City Council and Barrow Borough Council to increase the economic prosperity of the Lancaster and South Cumbria region. The three councils are working closely to develop a more sustainable economy and jointly promote the area as a place to live, study and build a career. There remain ambitious plans to seek national investment for various strategically important projects to support economic vibrancy around Morecambe Bay. The partnership has been strengthened through the Councils submission of The Bay proposal to Government following their request for Local Government Reorganisation bids.

The partnership has resulted in the creation of a joint committee known as the Lancaster and South Cumbria Prosperity Board. The joint committee provides political and democratic accountability and reinforces the sense of developing a functional economic area. The meeting minutes can be found on the Councils website.

During the Covid pandemic work has continued to refine and focus proposals for a growth deal type programme to attract significant public investment to transformational growth projects and importantly drive Coronavirus resilience to the region's economy. A Morecambe Bay Prosperity & Resilience Strategy has been produced identifying key priorities and opportunities for the area.

There is also collaborative working on another Cross-Bay initiative known as the Cultural Compact, with the area being selected as one of only two "rural" areas in the UK by Arts Council England for an innovative new approach to releasing untapped economic potential through investment in culture.